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LAKES IN ART : KILLARNEY

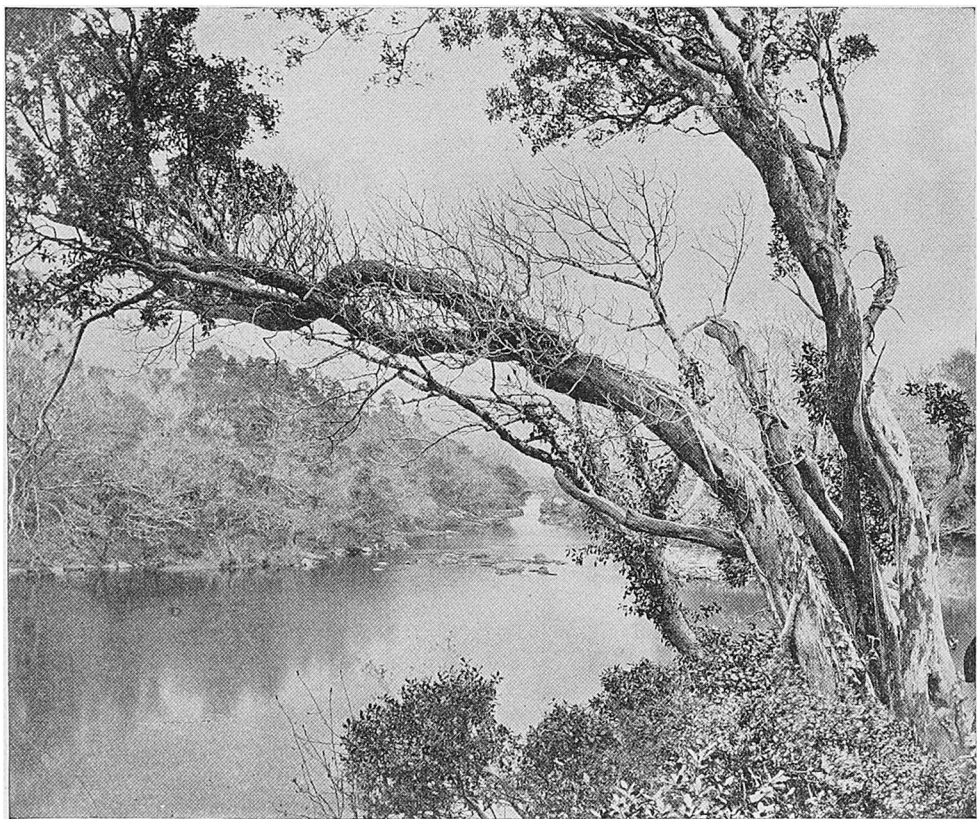
BY CHARLES TURNER

Illustrated from original photographs by Payne Jennings.

THE lakes of Great Britain have inspired three schools. The lochs of Scotland are the background of the school of martial lyrics. Against the meres of Cumberland and Westmoreland is set the work of the school of the philosophical poets. The lakes of Ireland, failing to touch the intellect, have laid the pictorial, artistic instinct under vassalage.

So much has this undesigned, yet pervading, division grown into the public mind, that the mere thought or mention of the lochs of Scotland involuntarily calls up the tramp of armed hosts, the clang of the claymore, the ear-piercing pibroch, and all the pomp and vanity of warlike combat. Loch Awe does not suggest a landscape, but the theatre of centuries of the raids of the McCullum Mores, and the stronghold of the Black Knight of Rhodes. Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, the pass of Glencoe and Loch Katrine, touch only the responsive chords of Rob Roy, Roderick Dhu, Bonnie Prince Charlie, and the clansmen of a hundred chiefs, gathered in fatal faithfulness for the fray. The landscape never comes first to the mind.

So, too, the mention of Windermere and Ulswater, Grasmere and Derwent-



MUCKROSS LAKE—THE MEETING OF THE WATERS

water, bring not the landscape, but the men who made the Lake School—the contemplative Wordsworth wandering through the fells, deep buried in problems of high emprise, or one or other of his contemporaries or successors, who have made the lakes the land of song, but have failed to clothe them with an artistic attraction.

'Tis not so with the lakes of Ireland. They are the artist's own. The very name Killarney—which has absorbed to itself, by the by, glories belonging to its neigh-

bors—brings, like a flash on the mental retina, *the place*, the scene, the air. *It* lives, and not its bards. True, it is not entirely free from the poet-brotherhood's homage, for here and there a son of Erin, and even the Sassenach, has rendered his meed of praise; Moore, who, curiously enough, on Irish subjects seemed

but to trifle with words, penned a weak rhapsody to "Innisfallen," and "Waters Meet" inspired Shelley's muse; but, taken as a whole, and by comparison with the other two lake systems, Killarney is the artist's, and not the poet's, lake.

Why this should be so is not far to seek, for Killarney is nature's own—nay, more, is nature's fondling, whose birth-formation lies back in the far-away, incomprehensible remoteness of the glacial period, and whose present is clothed, if not with the flora of the tropics, at least with the softening influences of the Gulf Stream, where it first impinges on the brow of the Emerald Isle. And, through all the centuries, nature has been steadily and artistically at work. Every form of rock, every color on nature's palette, every hue of



MUCKROSS ABBEY



ONE OF NATURE'S TINY WORKSHOPS

foliage, every play of light and shade, every variety of grouping, every effect which it seems possible for sun, air, water, and earth to produce, is spread with lavish hand, and placed and posed with an artistic effect that almost bespeaks design. Nature, revelling in her own resources, has planned the vista and spread the canvas ; the emblazoned walls, the tessellated floor, the canopy of matchless blue, all are hers.

Of the Upper Lake this is especially true, for there man and the everlasting hills are alone, life there is life of the sparkling cascade, life of the myriad shafts of light quivering through the golden glory of the spring or the imperial purple of more gorgeous autumn ; but man has had no lot or part in the Upper Lake.

Few changes are more complete than the passage from the Upper Lake, through Colman's Eye, into the Long Range, the stream which strings the lakes together,



THE VALE OF AVOCA

behind you Cromaglin, apparently before you the impenetrable foothills of the Reeks, all round the hills of Kerry, range upon range, stand sentinel to the sky, above you the splendor of the midday sun ; all is bright, scintillant, and cheerful. In a moment, round a promontory so craftily hidden as to defy detection by the eye, the boatman deftly swings your craft with the powerful stroke of one hand, and presto ! the scene is changed. Dark, silent, sinuous, narrower and narrower becomes the stream, gloomier and silent the shores, as gradually rises into view the rock on which the eagles have made their hereditary home, and to which they have given their name, one thousand eight hundred feet above the water's edge.

But man, cultivated, artistic man, was here centuries before the foundations of the Old Weir Bridge were laid. St. Finhian Lothar (the lesser), one of those men of God who carried the Christian faith and the fame of Ireland's scholarship and

piety to the ends of the civilized world in the sixth century, founded on sweet Innisfallen Isle an abbey, the ruins of which are a little less beautiful than the scenery in which they are placed.

Across the water from fair Innisfallen, on a narrow peninsula often separated from the mainland so as to become an island, stands a building, which legend, that fruitful mother of the fertile Celtic brain, has invested with an antiquity beside which good St. Finhian's home pales into insignificance—"Ross Castle," the afore-time home of "The O'Donoghue Mors."

Did I say legend? Nay, legend is a very modern matter-of-fact foundation

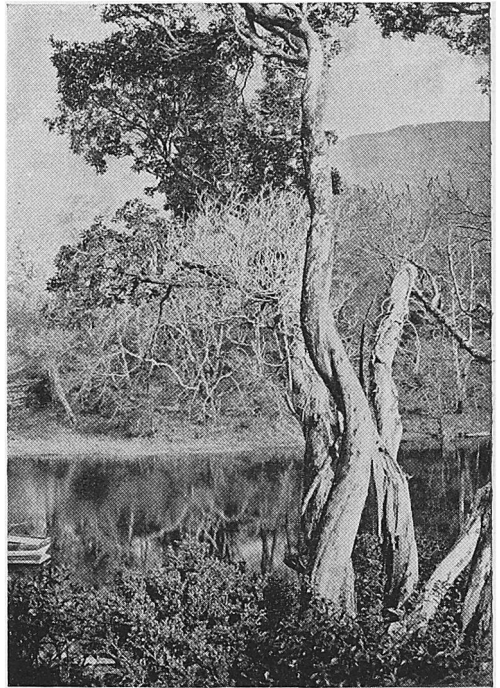


HIGH-NOON

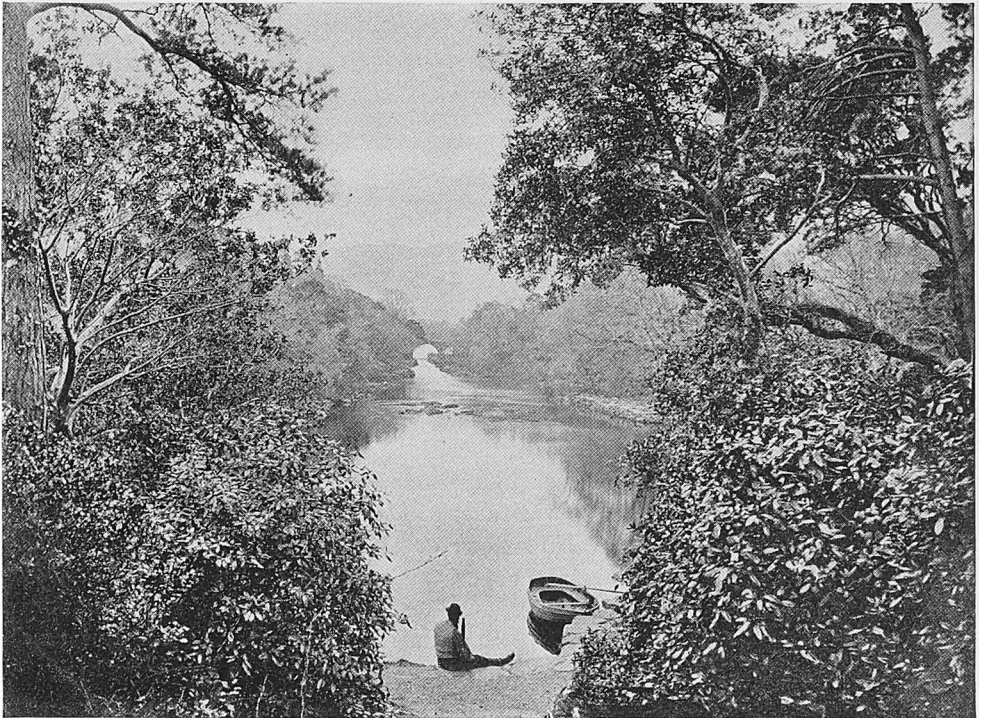
for the O'Donoghues. The native boatman will bid you peer down into Ross water, and will show you to his own satisfaction, if not to yours, the town buried on the lake-bottom by the Fairies in resentment against its taking part with Giant O'Donoghue, the founder of the race. Indeed, there is a whole literature of folk-lore to be gathered around Killarney; every island has its local genii, every hero a faithful band who transmit from generation to generation the cult. Very old-world and refreshing are their narratives of these mystical fantasies. They clothe the destitute with a charm all their own; but it is not pictorial art, and therefore we will refrain from following it, or the mazy labyrinth of the genealogies of the O'Donoghues. Suffice for us, that the grim keep of their castle adds not a little to the artistic completeness of the Lower Lake, and that its last authentic appear-

ance in history was glorious and patriotic. Since its garrison of 5,000 laid down their arms to the stern and unbending Cromwell, it has played only an artistic part in Killarney's history.

The Middle Lake gives unrivalled views of that pride of the lakes and of the country side, "Muckross Abbey," a picture made familiar throughout the modern world by the scenery of Boucicault's popular drama, "The Colleen Bawn." Such base uses could not destroy the charm of Muckross. He who would *feel* Muckross must row round its fairy bay, not once, but in all the varied seasons of sun and gloom, which follow each other, in so characteristically an Irish way, over the fair bosom of its waters. Or, better still, in the gloaming or by silvery moonlight, saunter through the chequered shades of its still almost perfect cloisters, and watch the dial-like shadow of the symbolic yew which marks the passing of the silent night.



ARBUTUS TREES



THE OLD WEIR BRIDGE—MUCKROSS LAKE